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ABSTRACT

This paper addresses the role community colleges can play in moving the working poor toward economic independence. Since Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF) was enacted in 1996, there have been many new job openings in the country. But, employment and earnings prospects for job seekers leaving the welfare system are dismal. TANF clients are filling jobs in the service sector that pay near-minimum wage. In 1963, 35% of the labor force worked in low-paying jobs, but by 1998 that figure had risen to 63%. Community college vocational programs are uniquely poised to provide the training needed for low-wage workers to advance into better-paying jobs. The author examines the programs offered at three community colleges, each of which illustrates innovation in focusing on career ladders or wage progression. The schools are Shoreline Community College, Washington; South Seattle Community College, Washington; and Community College of Denver, Colorado. Three programs were established at Shoreline using funds from the Department of Social and Health Services. South Seattle uses modules as a way to divide a longer course or program into manageable segments with job advancement connected to each of them. And Denver's Essential Skills program accents the importance of relationships in the process of learning. (Contains 32 references.) (NB)

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Community Development Research Center

COMMUNITY COLLEGES AS LABOR MARKET INTERMEDIARIES: BUILDING CAREER LADDERS FOR LOW WAGE WORKERS

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October 2000

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Overview

Since Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF) was enacted in 1996, the country has been experiencing a tight labor market, creating vacancies for many new workers. Yet even in this "booming" economy, the employment and earnings prospects for job seekers leaving welfare are dismal. Openings in the service-sector occupations that former TANF clients are filling (e.g. retail clerk, lawn service technician, certified nursing assistant, child care provider) are growing, but pay in these low-skilled jobs remains near the minimum-wage level and has not increased in real terms in two decades. Indeed, despite record economic growth over the past five years, over one-fifth of male and almost one-third of female workers earn poverty-level wages (Mishel, Bernstein and Schmitt, 1999).

These figures are not merely a reflection of more people working part-time. Although more full-time jobs are available to help people make the transition from welfare to work, a report by The Conference Board found that the number of full-time workers who are poor increased between 1997 and 1998 (Barrington, 2000:4). This study estimates the number of working poor in the U.S. at between 4 and 5 million. The cause of this trend is an increase in the relative share of low-skill, low-wage employment, largely driven by the shift from manufacturing to services (Table 1).

Table 1
Growth of Employment by Pay Category
1963-1998

Industry	% of employment	
	1963	1998
High-paying	28	21
Middle-paying	37	16
Low-paying	35	63

Source: The Conference Board

Clearly, long-term economic independence will not be achieved simply by moving people off TANF and into entry-level, dead-end jobs. Low-wage workers must be able to advance into more skilled and better paying jobs. To do so, they need to continually upgrade their skills.

Community college vocational programs are uniquely poised to provide the training needed for low-wage workers to advance into better paying jobs. Most of the nation's community colleges have developed short-term training programs, some specifically for TANF clients. A few community

colleges are attempting to build on these programs by offering courses and programs for students after initial placement to prepare them to advance on the job. This report will present best practices in these programs.

The intent, however, is not simply to present best practice. Cumulatively, even best practice programs will have very limited impact if the economy is creating too many low-paying, dead-end jobs. Community colleges are uniquely positioned to succeed at creating career ladders and wage progression opportunities because they have the potential to influence the structure of employment. Many community colleges engage in economic development activities that provide technical assistance to businesses to help them become high-performance work organizations[1].

These programs seldom have any connection to the vocational programs community colleges offer for people moving off welfare. In both types of programs, however, community colleges act as labor market intermediaries that not only connect "supply" with "demand," but also attempt to influence demand. To the extent they are successful, community colleges can help to create better-paying jobs as well as provide the training for people to fill them. Going to scale with career ladder and wage progression strategies means that community colleges have to convince employers to create more middle-paying jobs.

This report examines the extent to which community colleges play an active role in encouraging employers to restructure jobs, given the proliferation of low-wage jobs. Three highly successful community college programs that focus on career ladders or wage progression are presented. They are:

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[1]Both federal and state programs fund community colleges to retrain workers for new jobs, provide technical assistance to local employers, and provide customized training (see Bakum, 1991; Brint and Karabel, 1989; Rosenfeld 1994). These business outreach programs usually focus on small and medium sized enterprises. Some community colleges provide these services as partners in Manufacturing Technology Centers (MTCs), and Manufacturing Outreach Centers created in 1988 as part of the federal Manufacturing Technology Extension Center Act. The MTCs and MOCs provide modernization assessment, analysis of training needs, technical assistance in adopting new technology and modern management practices, workforce training, and advice on entering new markets (Shapiro and Roessner, 1993). Many states fund business outreach and technology transfer programs in all of their community colleges (Clark & Dobson, 1991; Flynn & Forrant, 1997).

- *Job Ladder Partnership*, Shoreline Community College (Seattle, Washington)
- *Essential Skills Partnership*, Community College of Denver (Colorado)
- *Environmental Health and Safety Program*, South Seattle Community College (Washington)

I highlight the extent to which community colleges can be intermediaries that influence employers to create better jobs. This discussion will focus on the structure of employment, the policy environment, and how community colleges institutionalize programs with limited funding streams.

The sites were identified through informal interviews with community college administrators, membership organization representatives, and researchers. The three colleges were mentioned repeatedly as ones trying to build career ladders into their certificate and degree programs, particularly those programs targeting welfare-to-work clients.

Interviews were conducted at each site with faculty and administrators, the college presidents, business partners, social service agency and community organization partners. In addition, college documents and pertinent data were evaluated.

Community Colleges as Intermediaries

About two-thirds of community colleges have short-term vocational programs geared to welfare recipients (Meléndez and Falcon, 1999). Most of these are short term (3-6 months), are non-credit, and do not articulate with related degree programs. In 1999, I was part of a research team that identified best practice in these programs (see Fitzgerald and Jenkins, 1997). In this project we identified teaching innovations such as learning communities and integrating literacy with vocational instruction. We examined how community colleges formed partnerships to provide the intensive support services needed by this population to complete training and adjust to the world of work. We also noted the concern many of the dedicated community college faculty and staff had over the forthcoming impact welfare reform would have on their programs. Staff at LaGuardia Community College's highly effective welfare reform program, the **College Opportunity to Prepare for Employment** (COPE), expressed pride in moving many former welfare clients from basic literacy to an associate degree in three years. Yet they feared the time limits and "work first" requirements of the recently passed welfare reform legislation would undercut their ability to continue the program.

Indeed, their fears were justified. New York has not invested savings from reduction in welfare case loads into education and training (see Ensellem, 2000). Since New York City's welfare-to-work program, WEP, prioritizes workfare over education, funds for COPE have been reduced (see McCormick, 1999, for details on state and city funding of public assistance in New York). While cutting COPE funds, the city expanded the program from 4 to 10 campuses. As a result, LaGuardia's COPE classes have tripled in size while funding has been reduced. The counseling and case management that made the program so successful have been reduced drastically. Staff have been forced to select students requiring less remediation. COPE students are now only eligible for one year or shorter certificate programs, lessening the possibility that they will be able to obtain jobs that will move them out of poverty.

Community college welfare-to-work programs throughout the country have faced similar constraints. "Work first" has forced many community colleges to do more "creaming" and less training. But there has been another response. Some community colleges are developing a second generation of programs that not only use short-term training to get people into jobs quickly, but also have explicit steps for continuing training after students become employed. These programs provide real opportunities for wage progression and occupational upgrading that are not present in most welfare-to-work programs.

The three career ladder programs described in this report take different approaches to career ladders and focus on different industries. The Job Ladder Partnership at Shoreline Community College has pathways in manufacturing, customer relations, health services, and information technology. South Seattle Community College is experimenting with offering "modules" instead of courses in environmental health and safety. The Essential Skills Partnership at the Community

College of Denver has several job ladder career tracks, but has been more successful in developing early-childhood education and medical instrument technology pathways. Talks are underway with partner banks to introduce career advancement into the teller-training program.

Although relatively new, these programs are showing impressive results both in job placement and advancement. Their success is mostly a function of identifying a limited number of occupations that have relatively high starting wages, minimal entry-level requirements, and opportunities for advancement. Yet the Economic Policy Institute and Conference Board studies reveal there are few jobs with these characteristics. This is not simply a supply-side problem that can be solved by providing more education and training programs. It is a demand-side problem of an economy not creating enough jobs that allow entry-level workers to advance. Because of their economic development mission, great hope has been placed in community colleges as intermediaries that not only link supply and demand, but also influence employers to create better jobs (see Fitzgerald, 1998; Rosenfeld, 2000). Is this too much to expect of a community college? To answer this question, we need to have a better sense of what is meant by a labor market intermediary.

Labor market intermediaries connect people to jobs. Their roles can be placed on a continuum, based on the extent to which they try to influence supply and/or demand factors. The most basic intermediaries don't add value to the supply, but simply make connections. Head-hunters, for example, help employers find the most qualified people for specific jobs. They operate at the high end of the labor market, finding highly qualified people for top jobs in firms or organizations. The U.S. Employment Service, which helps unemployed workers find jobs, is also in the category of connector. The average of $80.00 spent per participant reduces their Unemployment Insurance payments by about two weeks (Osterman, 1999:135). At both the high and low end of the labor market, "Temporary" Employment agencies also connect people to jobs. Although many welfare-to-work programs are built on the concept of "temp to perm," there is increasingly a dark side to this type of intermediary. Proliferating temp agencies working through a network of hiring halls in Chicago's inner-city neighborhoods provide manual day labor for suburban employers. In the crudest sense they are intermediaries, but as Peck and Theodore (1999:4) reveal, their actual function is to assist firms in exploiting workers "whose social and economic circumstances render them contingent." At best, connectors reduce the length of unemployment. At worst, they are exploitive.

Placement intermediaries provide some combination of job training, education, and social support services to prepare clients for the labor market. Since most middle-class people have access to education and social networks through which jobs are found, placement intermediaries work mostly with low-income groups. Many Community-Based Organizations (CBO's) have become quite effective in this arena. A large literature identifies the specific program elements and documents how organizations network to provide the comprehensive set of services needed to move people from welfare to work, often into living-wage jobs (see Meléndez, 1996; Harrison, Weiss and Gant, 1997; Meléndez and Harrison, 1998; Harrison and Weiss, 1999; Lautsch and Osterman, 1998). Many community colleges also network with CBOs and social service agencies to provide support services, but some offer them on their own (see Fitzgerald and Jenkins, 1997). Both CBOs and

community colleges develop relationships with employers to ensure they are providing the right skills and to extract commitments to hire program graduates. There is seldom any attempt to influence employers to increase wages, add benefits, or to improve the quality of jobs.

A progressive intermediary attempts to work on both the supply and demand sides of the labor market. Since community colleges provide education and training and many have an economic development mission, they have the potential to address both supply and demand side issues. Many community colleges assist firms both in adopting new technology and upgrading the skills of their workers. Most states fund community colleges to do business outreach and technology transfer (see Fitzgerald, 1998). By providing technical assistance in manufacturing modernization and customized training, community colleges have the potential to maintain and increase the number of high performance workplaces in the local economy. To the extent that providing these services to employers results in more employers taking a higher wage and skill path, community colleges can have some impact on local labor market demand. Yet there is little evidence to date that community colleges have the leverage needed to convince employers to change if the low road is profitable.

In the career ladder and wage progression programs presented below, community colleges are attempting to convince employers to increase pay, add benefits, create advancement opportunities, and consider internal promotions that would not have been considered previously as higher quality, more stable workers become available through their training. I present the cases individually before discussing the extent to which the programs allow the community colleges to act as progressive intermediaries.

The Three Community Colleges

The programs included are not necessarily "best practice" since most of them are too new to have much data on long-term career progression. I chose them because they illustrate innovation in focusing on career ladders or wage progression. The case study presentations do not provide comprehensive information on the entire community college or even on related programs. The details on the programs are used to frame the discussion on limitations imposed by economic structure, institutional factors, and how state policy can support wage progression strategies. Each of these issues speaks to the ability of community colleges to be labor market intermediaries.

Shoreline Community College
Job Ladder Partnership Program

Shoreline Community College in Seattle, Washington is one of the few community colleges integrating career ladders into its welfare-to-work programs. The Job Ladder Partnership involves Shoreline and six other community or technical colleges with employers in creating work and learning pathways in four occupational clusters: manufacturing, customer relations, health services, and information technology. The areas were chosen because of local demand in occupations in these sectors that pay family wages and offer benefits. Further, these clusters have relatively low entry-level skill requirements, yet offer opportunities for advancement with readily available training.

Funding for the program is the result of the commitment of Governor Gary Locke to focusing welfare reform on moving people not just off welfare but out of poverty. Locke sees the state's community college system as essential in accomplishing this goal. To realize it, the State of Washington made an initial of transfer of $17 million from the Department of Social and Health Services (DSHS) to the State Board for Community and Technical Colleges in 1998. The funds were earmarked for developing programs to promote job advancement and wage progression. In 1999 an additional $20 million was allocated for the programs.

Three programs were established at Shoreline with these funds:

? A 12-week pre-employment training program that links to the needs of one employer or group of employers.

? A work-based learning program that provides tuition assistance to serve as a bridge between free tuition and eligibility for federal Pell grants. Parents under 175 percent of the poverty line who work 20 hours weekly are given free tuition to any community college technical program, usually for 1 or 2 quarters, until Pell eligibility commences.

? Professional and technical education redesign and delivery. This program designates funds to community colleges for redesigning programs to make it easier for students to combine school and work (e.g. offering evening and weekend courses), to shorten programs and to add more certificate programs.

In 1999 another work-study program was added for TANF recipients. This program provides part-time employment, usually with community-based organizations, for students enrolled in college courses. Work-study jobs must be related to the student's course of study and can last no longer than two academic quarters. Students can work in the private sector or on campus.

By the time the funds were allocated Shoreline's Workforce and Economic Development Division was already experimenting with welfare reform programs based on career ladders. One program prepared students to be billing specialists, then provided training for them to move up to medical reimbursement specialist, and from there into a nationally certified program in health care

information technology. The program had tremendous success in both placing students in entry-level jobs and in the number of students who returned for more training.

Building on this success, Dr. Holly Moore, Vice-President for Workforce and Economic Development at Shoreline, called a meeting of area community and technical colleges to coordinate a response to the new workforce development funds. The six community colleges serving the suburban parts of the county agreed to collaborate in program planning and development. The goal of the partnership was to share resources and connections to serve students and employers better.

Each of the colleges had independent relationships with employers, maintained by "customer service representatives." Under the new partnership, the customer service representative at any given college represents all of the colleges. Representatives with strong existing relationships with employers in one of the sectors serve all the colleges in that sector. In other cases, representatives serve businesses in all four focus sectors in a geographic region. The point is to build on pre-existing relationships. Sharing business partners allows the schools to fill job orders more efficiently. Since the schools are on different schedules, at least one of them is likely to have graduates at a time an employer has hiring needs.

The business partners are essential to the program. Each college has one lead staff member in charge of employer outreach. Business partners are assigned to each outreach specialist based on who has the best relationship with that employer, as opposed to geography or industry. Of course, colleges with strong programs in a given occupational area tended to have the best employer connections. The partners work closely with staff on developing curriculum and also provide instructors for some courses. Approximately one-third of job placements are with partner employers. Another third is with other employers in the same industry and the remainder is with employers not in the industry for which training was provided.

Part of the work in developing partnerships with employers is adapting the programs to include specific skills employers need. Although some business partners are committed to hiring program graduates, they have not all approved the curriculum of each program. This will be a long process, as many employers define the same job quite differently. A medical technician, for example, may have different job responsibilities in different hospitals. But through the partnership of colleges, each can tailor its program to the needs of a specific employer. Employers consistently emphasize good work habits and trainability over specific occupational skills. Thus, two-thirds of Shoreline's Pre-Employment Training (PET) curriculum focuses on life and employability skills, job search skills, world of work instruction, and basic skills.

The retention specialist is the liaison between students and employers. The career pathways depicted in Fig. 1, 2 identify many possibilities for advancement. The retention specialist works with students in choosing one of the paths. Shoreline first started testing the effectiveness of intensive retention services through the college's participation in a project sponsored by Private-Public Ventures (P/PV). The project funds community colleges in several states to help students understand the importance of getting and keeping a job and moving on to next level. The next level may be a

pay increase or a totally different career path. Shoreline started the intensive retention services with its CNC program. After two quarters of instruction, most CNC graduates take entry-level jobs paying anywhere between $8.50 -$15.00 per hour, depending on how well they perform.

TANF recipients get authorization from their DSHS case manager before entering the program. Potential students then go through an assessment to determine barriers before entering the program. Typical problems include: lack of housing, domestic violence, transportation, child care, and dealings with court systems. It is important to determine if the timing is right, since the program has a strict attendance policy. If it seems that the problems can be managed while in the program, students are referred to appropriate support services.

The Job Ladder Partnership

A guiding principle of Shoreline's Job Ladder Partnership is to combine education and work as much as possible. Students go through an initial assessment and are then placed into the pre-employment program, work, remedial classes or ESL. As soon as students have enough skills to begin an entry-level job in one of the chosen sectors, they have to combine work and continuing education. Students develop a career plan early on and work with a counselor to keep moving ahead on their career goals.

The two steps in the program are described below:

1. Pre-Employment Training (PET)

In this 12-week program students acquire life and work skills. Students develop a career plan and identify the education and training required to achieve it. Students select evening (weekdays, 5:00-9:30 PM) or weekend (Friday-Sunday) sessions. They also select one of three pathways-manufacturing assembly, office occupations (information technology), or health services (basic care giver). Students interested in non-office customer service positions are referred to other Job Ladder Partnership colleges for call center training. In addition to the 7.5 hours per week of occupational skills instruction, each student attends an additional 14.5 hours in basic and "soft" skills workshops in Industrial Safety/First Aid and Worker Rights and Responsibilities, and classes in Life/Employability Skills, Job Search Skills, and basic computer skills. Syllabi for these courses are quite detailed, outlining the skill competencies, expectations and weekly course material to be covered.

A Computer Laboratory offers supervised, self-paced instruction in keyboarding, computer software, and using the Internet. Students requiring basic skills remediation are referred to college ABE/GED or ESL programs, or to the College's English, math, or reading/writing learning laboratories. Students do not have to work during this part of the program, although 30 to 40 percent do.

Students receive a certificate when they complete the program. In many program areas Shoreline is moving away from offering degrees to offering skill-based credentials. This is part of a broader trend at both the community college and high school levels. In fact, both Washington and Oregon already have plans to offer skill-based certificates of mastery in order to receive high school

diplomas. To develop certificates, Shoreline and other community colleges work with employers to identify a list of tasks needed for specific occupations. Programs are then redesigned to include these tasks, and performance criteria for students to demonstrate their competence are developed.

2. Placement and Advancement through Career Ladders

After completing the PET step, students must work at least 20 hours a week to continue in the program. Upon entering the PET program students begin working with a retention specialist and the program's placement services manager, who refer them to one of the partner employers. Toward the end of the program the retention specialists begin working closely with the student and the program's job developer. The retention specialists meet with students weekly to discuss job searches and to anticipate what their personal lives will be like once they are working.

Students are placed based on their performance. Students are not graded, but must have a 70 percent proficiency rating in all of their classes to earn a certificate. Students with high proficiency ratings are placed with partner companies, while those who do not perform as well are placed with other companies.

Shoreline has two staff members dedicated to retention. A third is provided for TANF students through TRAC (Training, Rehab, Assessment and Consultation), a for-profit organization contracted by DSHS. Nate Windle, Manager for Retention Services, explains either he or TRAC retention specialist Johanna Hedge keeps in touch with recent graduates weekly during their first 30 days on the job. Depending on the graduate, contact is reduced to once every two weeks between 30 and 60 days on the job. During this period, any number of issues can arise. Windle offers several examples how specialists work with recent graduates. When one man lost his transportation, Windle helped him arrange to get a bus pass and to make a device to carry his toolbox on the bus. Typically, students need help with figuring out how to get around such barriers but sometimes, Windle explains, it's other issues such as how to budget money to last between paychecks. "One of the things I try to bring home," he continues, "is that if you don't have a plan for yourself, someone will have it for you. Then you're stuck." Whether it's child care or transportation, staff help workers to see that they need to have backup plans. Hedge adds that she often provides moral support for students struggling to adjust to holding a full-time job. Sometimes children are resentful when their parent isn't available as much and the student feels guilty. Others need help in selecting appropriate work clothes. Several students, now that they are earning more, seek assistance in moving their families to safer neighborhoods. Whatever the issue, Windle says, "the idea of the program is that they don't have to figure everything out for themselves."

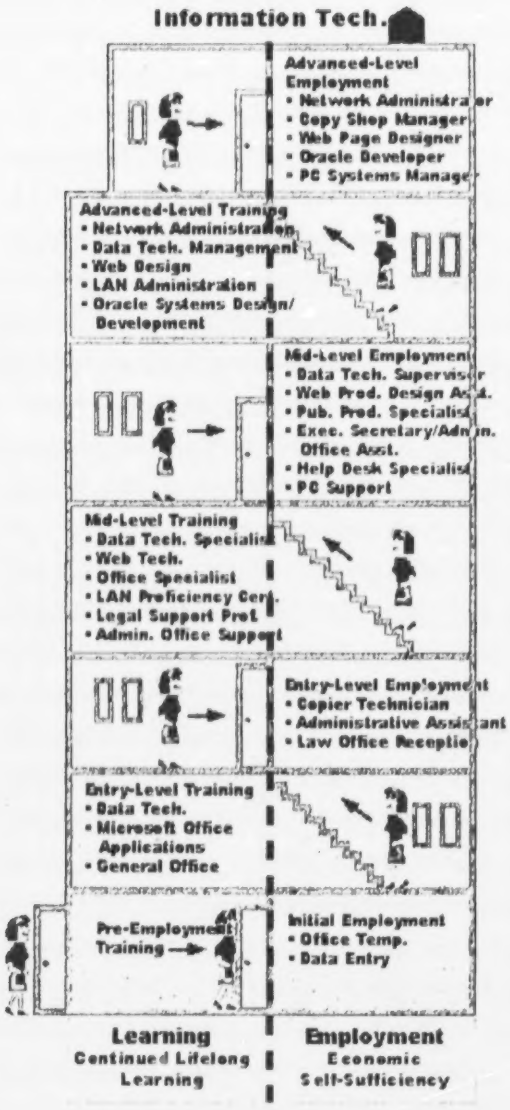
After the 90-day probation period, staff ask participants to begin thinking about their future with the company. "If they don't like their jobs," Windle explains, "I ask them to visualize staying for 3-6 months so they can get their work portfolio together. If participants are unhappy with their work, Windle encourages them to think about going back to school or to talk to their employers about advancement possibilities. "As much as we want them to keep their jobs, we want them to be happy" he continues, and they don't know what it is if they've never worked. After all, he points out, "We've all had time to do job exploration-I certainly did it in military." For the most part, retention staff maintain contact by phone.

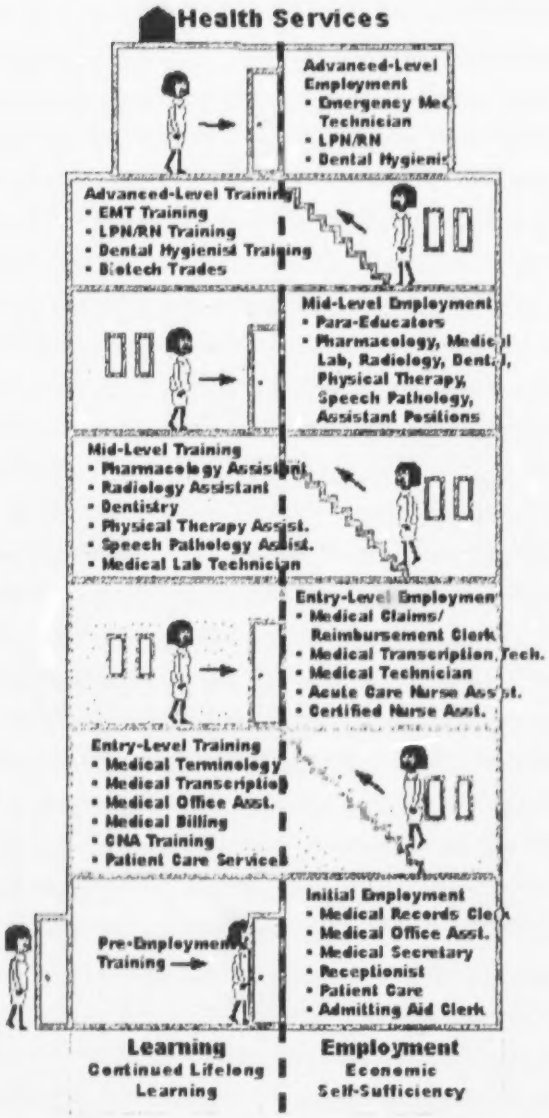
At this point the specialist identifies courses the participant could take at Shoreline, such as CNC Programming, that would lead to a better position and a raise. This and other courses take only one quarter, so the participants can see real connections between education and job advancement. "What's hard," Windle continues, "is that they typically have to do it on their own time. Although some employers pay for courses, many do not."

A new and unique computerized career-planning tool, the Career Pathway Passport, is being developed for this purpose. The interactive program will allow students, with the support and assistance of their retention specialist, to develop career plans and document their progress. Students begin career planning with a career counselor, but can continue modifying their goals and charting their progress independently. The Passport will have two databases-one listing available jobs in the four career pathways offered by the employer partners, and another containing the education programs offered by the six partner colleges in these fields. College and employer contacts will be listed. The Shoreline Web site describes how students will use the system:

> The career transcript portion of the passport works by using pull-down menus and forms. Every time a student enters or completes a training program or job they get either an entry or exit "visa," as appropriate. Employment or training that is not already part of the database can also be entered and included in the list of visas. Any change in employment can lead to a new visa. The visa system provides a hook for maintaining contact with those workers who are in the system, since they will want to come in and get their passports updated periodically with new visas.

The career-planning portion of the passport demystifies for students how they can combine working with learning to climb a job ladder. Using the pull-down menus listing database options, the retention specialist and the student together select training programs and jobs in their career pathway that take them from where they are to their long-term employment goal. Contact information gives the student concrete facts on whom to call to take advantage of the next employment or training opportunity on their customized career pathway. The system utilizes software technology to create a career-planning tool. At the core of this tool is a database of local opportunities. The State Board for Community and Technical Colleges is currently considering disseminating the system on a statewide basis.


Information Tech.
Advanced-Level Employment
• Network Administrator
• Copy Shop Manager
• Web Page Designer
• Oracle Developer
• PC Systems Manager
Advanced-Level Training
• Network Administration
• Data Tech. Management
• Web Design
• LAN Administration
• Oracle Systems Design/ Development
Mid-Level Employment
• Data Tech. Supervisor
• Web Prod. Design Asst.
• Pub. Prod. Specialist
• Exec. Secretary/Admin. Office Asst.
• Help Desk Specialist
• PC Support
Mid-Level Training
• Data Tech. Specialist
• Web Tech.
• Office Specialist
• LAN Proficiency Cert.
• Legal Support Prof.
• Admin. Office Support
Entry-Level Employment
• Copier Technician
• Administrative Assistant
• Law Office Receptionist
Entry-Level Training
• Data Tech.
• Microsoft Office Applications
• General Office
Pre-Employment Training
Initial Employment
• Office Temp.
• Data Entry
Learning
Continued Lifelong Learning
Employment
Economic Self-Sufficiency


Health Services
Advanced-Level Employment
• Emergency Med Technician
• LPN/RN
• Dental Hygienis
Advanced-Level Training
• EMT Training
• LPN/RN Training
• Dental Hygienist Training
• Biotech Trades
Mid-Level Employment
• Para-Educators
• Pharmacology, Medic l Lab, Radiology, Dent , Physical Therapy, Speech Pathology, Assistant Positions
Mid-Level Training
• Pharmacology Assistant
• Radiology Assistant
• Dentistry
• Physical Therapy Assist.
• Speech Pathology Assist.
• Medical Lab Technician
Entry-Level Employmen
• Medical Claims/ Reimbursement Clerk
• Medical Transcription Tech.
• Medical Technician
• Acute Care Nurse Ass t.
• Certified Nurse Asst.
Entry-Level Training
• Medical Terminology
• Medical Transcriptio
• Medical Office Asst.
• Medical Billing
• CNA Training
• Patient Care Service
Initial Employment
• Medical Records Cle
• Medical Office Asst.
• Medical Secretary
• Receptionist
• Patient Care
• Admitting Aid Clerk
Pre-Employment Training
Learning
Continued Lifelong Learning
Employment
Economic Self-Sufficiency

Support Services

The retention specialist refers students to community support services. Contacts are maintained with community organizations that help poor people enter the labor market. For example, many students visit a community-run store that provides free business clothes. The retention specialist also refers students to Shorelines' Manager for Family Support Services. This is a support person provided through the state's WorkFirst program. Shoreline refers students to three Department of Social and Health Services (DSHS) offices to ask about social services for which they might be eligible.

Students are responsible for making their own arrangements for transportation and childcare. They are encouraged to inquire with DSHS to see if they are eligible for transportation and childcare funds. Childcare is provided at the college and most students receive full or partial subsidies through DSHS. If partially subsidized, students are required to pay the difference between DSHS payments and the cost of services. Students sign an agreement that acknowledges their responsibility in these areas. The agreement further stipulates that students will be expelled from the program and will not receive a certificate of completion if they miss more than four sessions (two sessions for weekend students) or fail to meet with their retention specialist.

Outcomes

The completion and placement rates of the program compare quite well to best-practice, welfare-to-work programs throughout the country. The overall program completion rate is 74.3%, which is very high for a 12-week program. The completion rate varied from 56.6% (Winter 1999-2000) to 86.6% (Genie Program, Fall 1998).

One reason for the drop in wages in the second year is that more single women were enrolled in this period. For the most part, staff have not been able to entice women into the higher paying manufacturing jobs. In addition, the second year students have more serious barriers to employment. It has been harder to get them through the program in twelve weeks with the skills they need to qualify for positions with employer partners. As a result, they are placed in less preferable lower wage jobs to start, with the hope of helping them to move up after placement.

Preliminary retention and advancement data are available for 41 students who got jobs in the Spring 1999 training cycle. The average entry wage for these students was $9.57 per hour. About half of the students have received wage increases since starting. The current average wage for those who have experienced a wage or job change is $10.29 per hour, representing a 7.5% annual increase.

Table 2

PET Outcomes Summary, 1998-2000

Cohort	Total Enrolled	Total Completers	Total Employed	with benefits	empl rate	av. wage
					%	$
Genie* Fall 98	45	39	28	23	72	11.85
Genie Spring 99	15	11	9	6	82	11.40
Job Ladder Spring 99	45	37	29	21	78	9.60
Job Ladder Fall 99	60	45	35	19	78	9.18
Job Ladder 99-00	53	30	24	12	80	9.28
Job Ladder Spring 00	60					
Total FY 98-99	105	87	66	50	76	10.80
Total FY 99-00	179	75	59	3	79	10.05
TOTAL 98-00	284	162	125	80	77	10.5

* all students were enrolled in a customized training program for Genie Industries, a local supplier of hydraulic lifts.

Funding

The program receives approximately $2,500 per student from the state's pre-employment training, tuition assistance and program redesign funds. Retention services are partially funded by a grant from Public/Private Ventures (($50,000), and by DSHS (for a TRAC retention specialist). This funding covers the cost of training and retention services. Current funding levels do not acknowledge that students need retention services for at least a year after placement. As new students enter, the caseloads of the two full-time staff members providing retention counseling continues to increase.

Shoreline adds $55,000 in in-kind contributions for employer-sponsored training at the work site and staff. DSHS provides $17,000 per year in childcare subsidies.

The State of Washington has allocated $28.8 million to 34 community colleges for the fiscal year starting July 1st of this year. Community colleges will still have to apply for each program, but overall, there will be more funding available. These funds break down into seven line items:

1. $7.1 million for short-term (12 week) customized pre-employment programs that are co-sponsored by an employer. Funds are allocated to colleges by application.
2. $3.6 million for college work-study for TANF recipients and the working poor, allocated by a formula that allocates slots based on the number of eligible people at the college.
3. $6.6 million in work-based learning tuition for those working and going to school, allocated to colleges on a formula basis.
4. $4.4 million for support staff to operate programs, including financial aid officers, advisors and counselors, allocated on a formula basis with 3 different support levels.
5. $1 million in workplace basic literacy or ESL while working. Funded on a project basis, based on an application.
6. $5 million for Families that Work program that combines literacy and parent education. Available to community colleges and community-based organizations based on an application.
7. $1.1 million for childcare on campuses.

All of these funds were allocated from the state's TANF caseload savings. Expenditures on welfare cash grants have gone down by $250 million a year since TANF was introduced, although total expenditures have increased as the funds have been shifted to other services for the poor and working poor. Ken Miller, WorkFirst Coordinator of the Office of Financial Management, explains that the state is spending $50 million more on child care, $100 million more on training, job placement, and wage progression strategies as a result of the cash grant savings. Miller notes the $28.8 million allocated to community colleges represents a new relationship between the old welfare systems and community college systems.

Summary

Shoreline is on the cutting edge of community colleges in creating career ladder programs for low-income populations. This has required significant rethinking of how and when courses are offered, what makes effective business partnerships, and how to provide pre- and post-placement counseling to students. Few of these changes could have been made if not for significant financial support from the State of Washington. Further, a cooperative environment, both among community colleges and between employers and community colleges, has facilitated the high placement and retention rates. As promising as the results are, however, career ladders are not for everyone making the transition from welfare to work.

South Seattle Community College
Environmental Health and Safety Program

Administrators and faculty at South Seattle Community College see curriculum modules as the wave of the future in technical education. Modules differ from regular courses in that they are not scheduled according to the fixed semester calendar and require that students demonstrate performance-based competencies to pass them. Two forces are driving the move to modules. First, time limits and "work first" requirements of welfare reform mean that students need short-term training to prepare for work. Since TANF recipients are under pressure to find work quickly, they cannot wait for the next semester to start. Moreover, even a 12-week commitment can be difficult for someone not used to working *or* going to school. Modules offer a way to divide a longer course or program into manageable segments *with job advancement connected to each of them.* Second, many employers are looking for ways their employees can pick up specific skills quickly to perform their jobs. Modules allow busy people, many of whom already have degrees, to learn a specific skill without taking a semester-long course that may cover a lot of material that they already know.

To be more responsive to the needs of students and businesses, South Seattle President David Mitchell wants to see the approach institutionalized. The enrollment statistics support him: Less than half of enrollees are full-time day students. Interim Associate Dean Laura Parkins has been assigned to work with faculty and staff on developing more modular programs. It will take time to reach Mitchell's goal. It's a bigger task than taking an existing course and dividing it into segments. It involves working with individual employers and industry associations to identify skill standards and performance-based criteria for mastering them. Programs are designed so that each module is connected to specific skill standards. Typically, short-term certificate courses do not provide credits toward a degree. A unique aspect of the modules being developed at South Seattle is that they accumulate credits toward certificates and degrees.

The new Environmental Health and Safety Program highlighted in this case study illustrates how work and learning can be combined so that students can find jobs quickly and then take manageable steps to continue their education and increase their earnings. Further, it describes the role of business and community partners in developing a quality curriculum and supporting students as they make difficult life transitions. On the demand side, it reveals that as employers find better quality workers who stay on the job longer, they may be willing to transfer jobs from temporary to permanent status, pay better wages, and to provide benefits.

The Enviromental Health and Safety Program

Three factors converged to motivate South Seattle administrators and faculty to create a new modular program in Environmental Health and Safety. The first was diminishing enrollment. With enrollment declining, faculty and staff of the associate degree program in Toxicology, Chemistry and Hazardous Materials put together a Technical Advisory Board meeting in August of 1999 to ask how to improve the program. They learned that there was high demand for skilled technicians in the field, but that the program was not meeting the needs of employers. The program covered

theory, rules, and regulations, but not hands-on experience or recognized certifications. The employers desperately needed people with the certifications to work with specific substances required by the State of Washington[2].

The second was a particularly motivated Board member, Brad Schroeder, Vice President and co-owner of TCB Industrial. TCB provides supplemental labor for environmental cleanups. The company's clients include construction and environmental cleanup firms, and county, city, and state governments. Typical jobs include railroad accidents, Superfund site cleanup, household hazardous waste collection, and oil spills. The firm employs 107 people in Seattle and 60 in a Portland facility.

Three years ago, when Schroeder was having difficulty finding employees with the basic 40-hour hazardous materials certificate required for all cleanup jobs, he started a training program at TCB. Schroeder chose this route over working with South Seattle because of his experience teaching at another community college. He quit in frustration when he was required to teach material to students working in the environmental cleanup field that he and the students both knew was not providing them the skills they needed to do their jobs. Since the community college was not willing to change its curriculum, Schroeder decided to create a school that would offer all of the individual certifications required for brown fields certification (see figure 3). He was interested in building a new program at South Seattle that would complement the school he had already created and enable him to expand his business as well as meet the growing demand for labor in the growing environmental cleanup field. Schroeder mobilized employers in the field to work with South Seattle in revamping the program.

Third, redesigning the program into modules would allow the college to create wage progression opportunities for graduates of its pre-employment program in hazardous waste management. This program, funded by the Washington Community College Board, was designed for TANF recipients.

How the South Seattle Program Works

The program begins with a core of 10 modules that provide 14 college credits and certification in brownfields (see Fig. 3). The modules range from 8-24 hours of instruction[3]. Students must pass a performance-based examination to earn a certificate in each module. Then, students can follow a path toward either a technician or supervisor-level certificate.

The "HAZWOP" (hazardous waste operator) module is considered the minimum requirement for employment, even for workers with advanced degrees. It provides 40 hours of instruction in hazardous waste handling. This module was already being offered as a TANF pre-employment course. It is offered 2 to 3 times a year, usually with classes of 20 students. Once a person has the introductory and HAZWOP modules, the core requirement modules are the most sought after in the field. Once the program is fully operative, modules will be offered during evenings and weekends to accommodate work schedules.

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[2]The state acknowledges 16 separate hazardous waste certifications (see Figure 3).

[3] One credit is earned from 10-12 lecture hours, 22 lab hours or 33 work experience hours.

As workers accumulate certifications, they are eligible for more types of jobs (see Figure 3). Those certified for confined spaces can clean ship holds and machine pits for firms such as Boeing, a major employer in the Seattle area. Those with the blood-borne pathogen certificate are often sent to the University of Washington to clean HVAC systems in medical research. Those with the lock-out/ tag-out certificate work in many industrial settings locking out all energy sources while cleaning or repairs are being done. HAZWOP graduates start at $11.50 per hour and can go as high as $22.50 per hour since some graduates of the first environmental cleanup module are qualified to work in disposal of hospital waste, cleaning of contaminated sites such as shipyards, and recycling of hazardous materials such as paint. TCB and several other firms, including Foss, a refinery and oil distributor, and Boeing hire certificate holders.

The Technician Level Certificate prepares individuals to conduct assessments for the presence of hazardous materials such as asbestos. The Supervisor option has been popular among technicians who were working as hazardous waste technicians for firms such as Boeing before many certification requirements went into effect. Boeing and many other companies now require these workers to have degrees. This group has many of the specific skills, but needs additional instruction in computers, understanding the legislative environment, and applying the legislation to standards in the workplace.

All of the 50-53 credits for these programs count toward the A.A.S. degree in Environmental Health and Safety (see Fig. 4). Associate degree graduates earn between $30,000 and $40,000 and in some cases considerably more. Flexible scheduling and modularization allow students to learn while working.

The increasing problem of brownfields assures continued labor market demand. Many banks now require that both commercial and residential properties have Phase I site assessments before approving loans. The increasing need for site assessment has created a certification for people able to do Phase I, II, and III assessments[4]. Further, many employers are required to have board-certified industrial hygienists, safety professionals, and hazardous materials managers. People in these positions make sure companies stay within OSHA exposure limits, monitor compliance with health and safety procedures, develop emergency response plans, and establish company policies for handling wastes that meet legislative requirements. All three require board certifications based on passing a rigorous examination. People in these positions earn between $40-50,000 per year as the entry-level technicians.

Modules are taught by adjunct faculty, such as Schroeder, who have both field and teaching experience. Academic modules are taught by South Seattle faculty. Plans are underway to offer some of the more "cut-and-dried" modules, such as Clean Air Act and Clean Water Act, online. In these modules, students need to become completely familiar with the legislative regulations that affect their work.

Support Services

[4] A Phase I assessment establishes the potential for contamination by examining the deeds of the property and surrounding sites. If a strong likelihood is established, a Phase II study samples parts of the property for the presence of contaminants. A Phase III study is an even more complete analysis done by dividing the property into a grid and sampling segments in order determine the extent of contamination for estimating cleanup costs.

Prior to the new Brownfields curriculum, some students taking HAZWOP were referred from DSHS or community organizations. Keith Marler, Workforce Coordinator at South Seattle Community College, noticed that students from the King County Jobs Initiative (KCJI) and Seattle Jobs Initiatives (SJI)[5] who had case managers and an array of social service supports, had higher completion rates. Based on this knowledge, the college has developed partnerships with several community organizations and trade organizations to provide the resources students need to finish their courses. As the TCB school joins its program with South Seattle, KCJI will place clients at both places and provide case management and support services for them[6].

FUNDING

Funding for developing the new modularized curriculum is from the state's TANF savings reallocated to the State Board for Community and Technical College (see Shoreline case for details). Interim Associate Dean Parkins and TCB's Schroeder are developing grant proposals for funding the development of the A.A.S. degree in Environmental Health and Safety.

Summary

The success of South Seattle's Environmental Health and Safety program is a function of an industry characterized by occupations with clear requirements for advancement and a method of offering

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[5] These initiatives support local government, community organizations, and educational institutions in connecting people in low-income communities with training and living-wage jobs (at least $8. per hour) with benefits. Seattle is one of six cities that are part of the Annie E. Casey Foundation's 8-year Jobs Initiative. Started in 1995, the Jobs Initiative seeks to change how metropolitan labor markets work for low-income communities. Each site receives approximately $700,000 per year for planning and implementation and must provide matching funds from other sources. The King County Jobs Initiative has similar goals, but does not receive funding from the foundation.

[6] In addition, King County and the City of Seattle have a $147,500 grant from the federal Environment Protection Agency's Brownfields Job Training and Development Demonstration Pilots program to train people in this field. The pilots:

> bring together community groups, job training organizations, educators, labor groups, investors, lenders, developers, and other affected parties to address the issue of providing environmental employment and training for residents in communities impacted by brownfields. The goals of the Pilots are to facilitate cleanup of brownfields sites contaminated with hazardous substances and prepare trainees for employment in the environmental field, including training in alternative or innovative treatment technologies. (epa.gov/brownfields, 2000)

The two-year grant pays for 50 students from low-income neighborhoods to complete programs in environmental assessment and cleanup techniques. The initiative targets the Duwamish Corridor of Seattle, an industrial area with more than 50 abandoned, contaminated sites needing cleanup and redevelopment. KCJI clients take the 40-hour HAZWOP module and after employment continue taking modules to get more certifications. Training is provided by KCJI and TCB. The grant provides funding to expand the program and pay tuition for KCJI participants for up 176 hours of credit. As the program expands at South Seattle, KCJI clients can take these credits there.

training that makes it easy for working people to build additional competencies. Like Shoreline, state funds are available for developing this and other programs to serve low-wage workers. It will be interesting to see if the programs being developed in other occupations obtain similar levels of employer involvement and willingness to work on career advancement.

While community college programs in Washington and Oregon have received considerable state funds to create career ladder programs, the Community College of Denver has developed its career programs for TANF recipients through vocational certificates called Essential Skills. This program provides foundation skills in four separate career tracks-early childhood, financial services, manufacturing, and central supply technology. The college promotes the Essential Skills Program as a "work first" program since it requires internships, which count toward work-related activity. In developing this program, one of the college's goals is "to provide leadership in developing workplace education models that support both entry-level and incumbent workers." Five factors are behind the program's success: vocational training in high-demand occupations, a cohort approach that promotes group learning, intensive career counseling, internships, and strong business partnerships.

Early childhood education and paraprofessional medical occupations are often considered low-wage, dead-end jobs. Indeed, few programs designed to move people up career ladders from entry-level positions have been successful (see Fitzgerald and Carlson, 2000). Although limited, the Essential Skills programs in Early Childhood Education and Central Supply Technology have put students on a track to career advancement. Program Director Elaine Baker is especially proud of the college's success in early childhood education. "The research says that you can't take people on welfare and successfully place them in child care professions. Well, we're doing it," she continues, "it takes work, but our program has successfully prepared and placed nineteen group leaders into the Denver child care community." Students who have completed the central supply certificate go on to national certification. Eight program graduates are expected to complete the tutorial for the October 2000 certification test.

The Essential Skills Program

The philosophy behind Essential Skills is as important as the curriculum in understanding the program's success. A guiding principle of the program is that "all learning takes place in relationships." The relationships developed through the program are between students and counselors, employers, their families, and each other. This "whole life" approach is proving to be quite successful.

The student-counselor relationship begins as soon as students begin the program. Coordinators work with groups of 12-15 students and see those students daily. Baker points out that:

> Our folks require a lot of career planning. They don't project themselves into the future very well. They live in an interpersonal world driven by crisis, which does not lend itself to long-term planning. As their lives stabilize they need people to work with them on doing that.

Counseling includes more than choosing a career and an education plan. Counselors help students undergo a shift from seeing themselves as being incompetent to seeing themselves as learners capable of changing their lives.

The program creates an environment in which students can learn from each other. This is facilitated through group interaction and study sessions. Students can bring their children to dinner/study sessions. Throughout the program students engage in classroom discussions, individual sessions with the transition coordinator, and facilitated group sessions to develop strategies for overcoming barriers to self-sufficiency. Students focus on creating and maintaining circles of support to provide

backup systems (e.g. for childcare) to reduce the occurrence of missing work. Further, as the relationships continue after employment, the group reinforces the individual's professional identity. This approach requires coordinators and faculty to develop relationships with students based on trust, rather than authority.

Another emphasis of the program is on understanding the nature of work relationships. The internships lay out expectations for jobs and the program offers mentoring and workshops in which students can discuss their reactions to and problems with work. The main vehicle for this information is a course developed specifically for the program, "Communication for the Workplace." The course includes topics such as understanding performance appraisals and other types of feedback and managing conflict. The program views work as a culture where the newcomer doesn't necessarily understand the rules. Baker elaborates on the need to create a basic shift in how co-workers and supervisors are perceived: "Our students need to understand that work is a transactional environment- that personal circumstances do not change the fact that the work needs to be done. An employer who points this out is not being unsympathetic or discriminatory. They need to understand and not personalize that." The approach differs from most "soft skills" courses in both content and delivery. Content is blended with the everyday experiences that students are likely to encounter in their internships. Classroom exchanges are interactive, using problem solving and role playing. In addition to covering such basic skills such as writing a memo, students also go through exercises in listening, giving and receiving feedback, approaching superiors on the job, understanding learning styles, and diversity in the workplace.

The Essential Skills Curriculum

Students are recruited through the Denver Department of Human Services (DDHS). In the month prior to entering the program most students participate in a series of classes and workshops provided by DHS that include some career counseling, communication and other life skills. In the first month at CCD students attend classes 35 hours weekly, which includes GED prep for those who need it, group time, and workshops. During the next three months students work 24 hours per week in paid internships and attend vocational classes for 15 hours. All students take the core curriculum that includes computer literacy, a workshop in reading, writing, and speaking, and communication for the workplace. Students in the Early Childhood program take an introductory course and a lab. Central supply technician students take a class in medical terminology. Students complete two credits of work readiness and three credits in reading, writing, and speaking in workplace situations.

Table 3

Essential Skills Certificate

in Central Supply Technology

Workplace Core	Class Title	Credits
CIS 105	Introduction to the PC	2
REA 015	Reading, Writing, Speaking	3

COM 113	Communication for the Workplace	2
	Co-op Experience (credits may vary)	4
Vocational Core		
CST 100	Central Supply Technology	3
HWE 100	Medical Terminology	2
TOTAL CREDITS		16

Those with limited English proficiency also take ESL classes during the internship period. Students are not required to have a high school diploma or GED to enter the program. They must have a seventh grade or above reading level. Tutoring and GED preparation are available during the program. Students who fall below the minimum reading level are required to enroll in developmental courses or work in the developmental studies labs. Central supply technicians are required to have a high school diploma or GED.

Depending on electives, certificates require 16 credits. All courses earn college-level credits. The certificates articulate to other degrees, with almost 25 percent of certificate earners continuing to take courses toward an associates degree. While Essential Skills classes are self-contained because of scheduling around internships, staff attempt to mainstream students into regular college activities and services.

Since most of the certificate classes are separate from other degree programs, students are mainstreamed into the college community by getting them involved in the campus Women's Center. The Center is an additional source of assistance in dealing with childcare, transportation, domestic, or other issues that prevent students from attending or performing well in the program. The Center replicates services offered by Essential Skills counselors, but if students continue their education after completing the program, they are already acquainted with it should they need assistance.

Combining the internships with course work means that students understand the connection between what they are learning in class to what they do on the job. Further, students are evaluated on their performance in real situations during their vocational training.

Career Ladders

Although there are more job openings in financial services than the other tracks, the progression from cashier to other rungs in banking is not clearly aligned to college course work as in the other tracks. To address this, CCD has begun working with partner banks and the American Banking Institute to offer courses to program graduates. Although the childcare and medical instrument technician positions do not have the highest number of job openings of the four tracks, they offer more opportunities for career advancement.

Graduates of the Early Childhood Education program have experienced the most career advancement of the four tracks, probably because the educational component of the program is most clearly articulated. Essential Skills requires six credits in early childhood education. Group

leaders require six more credits in addition to 1395 contact hours with children. Upon completion of the Essential Skills certificate students have completed nine credit hours in early childhood education and 650 contact hours with children, putting them well on their way to group leader certification. Over half of those completing Essential Skills in Early Childhood complete the additional course work for becoming group leaders. Several students have completed the Colorado Director's Associate and Director certificate programs. Three students are scheduled to receive associate degrees this year. Group leader, director and director associate are positions in high demand in the Denver area.

Central supply technicians sterilize instruments for hospital surgeries. While there are only about 30 openings per year in Denver in central supply, it is a position that is often used for lateral moves within hospitals. Certification in central supply brings a pay increase between $.50 and $1.00 per hour. Starting hourly wages are around $9.00. The next rung on the ladder is surgical technology, a nine-month certificate course. Other possible moves are to certified nursing assistant or licensed practical nurse. Generally, people who go into medical technician do not want to do the type of hands-on personal care required in these occupations.

Support Services

Helping clients learn how to negotiate the world of support services is an important part of the program. This includes communicating effectively with Denver Human Services case managers, how to access other community resources, including child care, transportation, medical care, dental care, financial planning, housing, mental health services, and domestic violence resources. Students are helped in working around the inconsistent ways that policies and incentives are often implemented. Many services are introduced as part of the transitions skills curriculum, while more complex individual issues are worked through with the individual track coordinators or the clinical social worker on staff. DHS career track coordinators and welfare-to-work industry managers work closely with CCD track coordinators on recruitment, assessment, job placement, and support services issues.

A track coordinator is assigned to each cohort. The track coordinator keeps tabs on student attendance and performance for the duration of the program. Students discuss problems that may be affecting attendance or performance with the coordinator, and they jointly work out solutions. The coordinators do job placement and also keep track of student performance on the job. Finally, the track coordinators are the liaison between the program and the students' DHS case managers.

Outcomes

The combined tracks of the Essential Skills program have a 70 percent completion rate and a 58 percent employment rate at completion. Six months after completion 77 percent are employed. The 1998 cohort has a 66 percent retention rate one year after completion. The average starting wage for the first year was $7.51, and $8.51 for year two (see Table 4).

Wages in childcare have been increasing. Early childcare assistants start at $6.50 per hour and group leaders usually begin at $8.00. Director associates earn $11.00 per hour in the Head Start programs. Almost all of the childcare sites working with the program have benefit packages.

Funding

All funding for program development and operation has come from the City of Denver's TANF and welfare-to-work dollars and from the U.S. Department of Labor. The annual project budget includes

$422,261 in TANF dollars and $145,974 in welfare-to-work funds to serve 100-125 students per year.

Specific courses have been developed using various funding sources. The Communications for the Workplace course was funded by the U.S. Department of Education. The Colorado Community College Board provides funds for curriculum development. Limited funds are available, however, so a large part of what the state office does is help colleges find funding and help with grant application writing.

Summary

Essential Skills has taken the first steps in moving from a welfare-to-work to a career ladders program. The "whole life" approach that emphasizes learning how to build relationships in addition to building job-specific skills addresses many of the problems that make the transition from welfare to work so difficult. The career ladders in childcare and central supply technology are short. But for many students, climbing one or two rungs is quite an accomplishment. There is a strong commitment from the president and faculty to develop more career ladder programs in occupations and sectors with more opportunities for advancement. The State Community College Board has supported the certificate-approval process and has provided technical support throughout the program's development. Even with this support, staff are continually involved with securing grant funds for present operations as well as working toward the institutionalization of the program once the welfare to work funding streams are eliminated.

Discussion: What Would It Take to Institutionalize Wage Progression Strategies?

The set of factors influencing the extent to which community colleges can be successful in delivering wage progression programs ranges from priorities of individual colleges to the broader policy environment. Because of the level of commitment and need to secure external resources, wage progression strategies have to be a priority from the top down to succeed. Once this decision has been made, community colleges can learn much from each other in discovering which program features work. State policies in welfare-to-work, incumbent worker training, and economic development have to be in place to support wage progression. The structure of labor market demand, however, ultimately determines the extent to which career and wage progression strategies can expand. As labor market intermediaries, community colleges can influence skill demands of local employers in a small number of cases. But it is difficult for any one organization or institution to act independently as a labor market intermediary, and certainly this is true if state policy does not support it. Labor market intermediaries, at least those with goals of increasing access to and opportunities for better paying jobs, involve a network of organizations supported by state policy. These issues are discussed below, through seven principles gleaned from the experiences of the three colleges.

1. Community Colleges Need to Make Career Progression a Priority

Community colleges are being asked to be more things to more people than ever before. Their students range from those who don't have high school diplomas or English proficiency to those who have college degrees. Knowing that one college cannot be all things to all people, presidents must choose the areas in which they will specialize. Career progression programs are typically built from welfare-to-work programs, which are not as glamorous or profitable as customized training for business or developing new technology centers. Given the high levels of investment and low levels of support for welfare-to-work, the job of a president who prioritizes this area is not easy. A president must have, or create, a faculty and staff that embrace this mission.

The college presidents have done this in different ways. Shoreline, rather than forcing new programs on faculty who are already teaching full-time loads, uses adjunct faculty from industry. Lederer explains that the college's Workforce and Economic Development Office has been more successful in first demonstrating the effectiveness of new programs and new teaching approaches, and letting faculty decide for themselves how the new programs can complement or feed into existing offerings. This strategy allowed the college to get the program up and running quickly while generating faculty support. Funds for program redesign are now available to entice faculty to alter their classes along the lines of the program-including evening and weekend scheduling, offering credit for prior knowledge and learning, and more intensive, short-term courses that lead to certificates. South Seattle's Mitchell has encouraged faculty to develop independent relationships with employers in order to make their programs more responsive to industry needs. An Associate Dean was assigned specifically to help faculty interested in developing modular curricula in collaboration with business.

The presidents have also given staff considerable autonomy in developing programs. Elaine Baker, the Essential Skills Program Director at Community College of Denver, is able to hire faculty for the

program. She emphasizes that this is important because the students have very different needs and learning styles than the mainstream student population. A previous study of the program found that some staff provided by the community college had very low expectations for the students (see Meléndez and Suarez, 1999). In hiring, Baker looks for faculty who don't have preconceived ideas of ability, but are willing to provide more structure and experiment with different teaching styles to facilitate learning.

Indeed, one of the most important factors in a program's success is a willingness to experiment with new approaches. Windle explains that the Shoreline Job Ladders staff motivate each other to keep trying to improve how they do things, "We never say 'we've arrived.' We're always looking for ways to serve our folks better." This means that many things are tried that don't work. Windle elaborates, "Failure is a learning tool here, not a reason to get your head cut off." Indeed, this attitude is what it takes from administration and faculty to stay the course through years of program development, implementation, and continual fine-tuning.

2. Continuing Education Has to Be Flexible

An increasing number of community college students work while attending school. Colleges are trying several strategies to make course offerings more flexible. One is to offer classes at more convenient times. Several of the programs offer classes on evenings and weekends. All three offer frequent start-ups for programs. This means not only is there little wait-time between deciding on the program and starting, but also that if students have to dropout, they can start up again quickly when their life circumstances improve.

Community colleges are offering more certificate programs to be more flexible. The certificate approach allows the college to meet local labor market needs and add or eliminate programs as demand dictates. Because certificates typically are non-credit, they do not require as many bureaucratic steps to get up and running. Some of the colleges offer credits with certificate courses that count toward associate degrees. Although this strategy may mean that students without high school diplomas or GEDs are not eligible, credit accumulation toward degrees is essential for advancement in many fields.

South Seattle's modular programs provide another type of flexibility. The direct connection between completing modules and wage increases motivates workers to endure the hardship of working full-time while attending school. Interim Dean Laura Parkins and Workforce Coordinator Keith Marler suggest that modules are the wave of the future for community colleges. They note, however, that the approach challenges how community colleges are organized. Modules are organized on demand, not by the regular academic calendar and they often use adjunct faculty from industry. Parkins relates that modules are becoming standard for professional and technical training in many corporations. Some businesses have software to assess employee skills in multiple areas. Much of this assessment is done online. Employers like modules because an employee can attend classes to learn quickly the skills they need for the job. Working with staff from the Washington State Board of Community Colleges, Parkins is developing modularized, skill-based programs in electronics and emissions technology and has a grant to develop a program for the stevedore industry.

Denver's program is built less on flexibility than on replicating working life. Students spend a full day in a combination of classes, work-based instruction, or internship, and negotiating social services. Another way to make it easier to combine work and learning is to offer courses at the work site. But employers need to make it easier as well by providing at least partial release time for employees to attend classes. Some union-sponsored skills upgrade programs, for example, offer classes between shifts[7]. Typically, employees quit one hour early or start one hour later to take a two-hour class. One hour is donated by the employer and one by the employee. Although none of the colleges have employers, partners that are donating time for training, several staff suggested that they would request it at some point.

3. Continuing Education Has to Be Tied Directly to Job Advancement and Wage Progression

For new labor market entrants the whole concept of planning for one's future may be new. Even if one wants to move up, the connection between further education and job advancement is not always evident. This is especially true for people employed in places where there are no career ladders. Shoreline's Career Ladder information technology students, for example, would have little way of knowing that a job as a call-center operator for a software company could lead to a job as a web page designer.

The value of Shoreline's Passport system for developing career plans is that it shows students both how they can move up in one company and how they can advance by moving in related occupations in different industries. Shoreline's Career Ladders students are supported by retention specialists in developing career plans, and once it is running, will be able to use Passport to mark their progress and find jobs. Retention specialists are committed to working with each student for a minimum of one year or until the family is out of poverty. Passport is a more interactive and useful than most job listings available to TANF recipients in particular and community college students in general.

Community College of Denver offers similar help in mapping out career ladders, though it is done through a series of career awareness activities combined with individual vocational counseling. The "educational coordinator," a grant-funded staff person who works exclusively with the program, prepares an Individual Education Plan with each student at the beginning of the semester and helps students plan their future course of work and study as they become more aware of career options. Career mapping allows students to map out realistic career ladders and to understand what they have to do to achieve their goals.

Some industries are more suited to this approach than others. In the environmental health and safety field, incentives to entry-level workers are quite obvious. Workers know the exact wages associated with each certification. The more certifications they have, the more higher-paying jobs they can do. With the modular curriculum offered by South Seattle Community College, students can develop a plan for combining work and education that would be unmanageable under the/a semester system. Further, the modules add up to credits for degrees that are in demand by employers. Even environmental engineers with baccalaureate degrees take South Seattle's modular courses to fulfill requirements for continuing education.

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[7] See Fitzgerald and Carlson, 2000.

In sectors or occupations where career ladders are not as obvious, employers and community colleges can work together to identify ways of structuring work that build in career progression. Community College of Denver is beginning to do this with its banking partners.

4. State Government Has to Support Career Progression Programs

Funding wage progression programs is a challenge. There are several funding issues that affect the ability of these programs to go to scale. One is how particular types of community college programs are funded. A second is how state welfare policy allocates funds for education and training, particularly savings realized through declining TANF rolls. Some states are reinvesting these funds in education and training, others are focusing on childcare, and some are letting them accumulate unspent. The third is issue is how community colleges fit into overall state education reform.

Most community colleges receive funding from a combination of local property taxes, tuition and state funds. States typically fund community colleges on a full-time equivalency (FTE) basis[8]. This means that the state allocates a set amount per full-time enrollment in credit-bearing courses. Since most of the welfare-to-work programs are non-credit courses (typically because they are less than college level), funding must be obtained from targeted programs.

Staff responsible for fund raising at all three colleges expressed frustration that there is no reward system in state funding formulas for their programs. Programs that rely on special funding pools are not sustainable in the long-run. If the funds run out or an administration with different priorities comes in, funding can be cut abruptly, even if the program is highly successful. The three options are to get very good at writing grant proposals, to lobby for more state funds, or to change the programs to credit courses.

For states such as Washington that have earmarked welfare savings for skills upgrading, at least a temporary source of funding is available for turning welfare-to-work into career progression programs. The State of Washington has facilitated the Job Ladder Partnership at Shoreline and the modular programs at South Seattle by earmarking funds specifically for developing job ladders for low-income workers. Washington is one of few states that is spending all of its TANF case load savings (the state's TANF savings will be spent down by 2002) on training, placement, job retention and advancement, and childcare.

South Seattle is using the TANF funds to design modular programs which earn college credits and thus fall under the FTE funding formula. This involved a complete revamping of every course and going through an approval process at the college level and before the State Board of Community Colleges. Program development for SSCC took approximately one year. During this year about $40,000 was spent by taking staff from their regular assignments to do program development. The idea of credit-bearing modular courses may be easier to implement in Washington because of state education reform in the 1990's. The secondary system is moving from diplomas based on seat time to certificates of mastery based on skills, which will be accepted by all colleges and universities in the state. Community colleges in other states attempting to move to a system based on proficiency-

[8] Several states are moving to performance-based funding. These states typically use some combination of completion and job placement rates in allocating funds (see Fitzgerald, 1998 for more detail).

based certificates might have more difficulty in gaining employer and general public acceptance of the idea. In Washington the ground has already been laid, making implementation easier.

In Colorado the extent to which community colleges get TANF funds for education and training programs is determined at the county level. The Colorado legislature moved the responsibility for appropriating TANF funds to County Commissions that receive funds based on a formula and allocate them as they see fit. The City of Denver has expanded eligibility for TANF training funds ($3.8 million annually) to the working poor (defined as being within 225 percent of the poverty line) and dedicated the remaining TANF savings to support services in housing, medical care, child care, mental health services and other support services. Denver is one of the few counties that has allocated much funding for education and training.

The Colorado Community College & Occupational Education System is educating community college presidents on advocating for more education and training funds from the county commissions. Mary Crabbe Gershwin, Director of Systems Planning, laments that obtaining state funding has become a retail sales game. "We're telling our presidents," she continues, "that it's not sufficient to know good programs. We need to know who is making key policy and funding decisions. We need to do more advocacy." But, she cautions that this is not an easy task. "Presidents have faculty, capital construction and other needs facing them. Low-wage workers aren't on their radar screen." For the State Community College Board this means that Gershwin and her staff have to move it up on the agenda by aligning and integrating low-wage worker progression with other programs that presidents value. Her office works with presidents in connecting low-wage worker progression into a college's information-technology strategy or its employer-partnership strategy.

States differ on work first requirements. In Colorado one hour a day of vocational training counts toward participation requirements. By counting five hours a week for vocational training/basic skills, Essential Skills students are able to meet participation requirements during their internships with three work days. Shoreline's 12-week program does not qualify under Washington's "work first" regulations as work activity. In Washington 30 percent of total participation can be vocational training. What this means is that social service agencies are not likely to refer clients to three-month training programs, even though all evidence demonstrates that more extensive training (even three months) increases wages and reduces dependence.

Even in states that have earmarked funds for wage progression, staff must be entrepreneurial in their search for funds. Providing support services is a challenge for the colleges. The directors and staff at all of the programs spend a considerable amount of time writing proposals for funding to government agencies, foundations, and employers. A key role the Colorado Community College & Occupational Education System plays is helping colleges to identify foundation and government funding sources for program development and implementation.

5. Community Colleges Need Partners (but partners are not the same as intermediaries)

Partnerships allow organizations to provide services together or invest resources to their own mutual advantages. The primary mission of community colleges is education. They need partners to ensure that they are providing the skills that employers need and the support services that students need. All

of the colleges have effective partnerships with employers, social service agencies, and community organizations.

Employers are key partners in all three programs. Their contributions include: helping with curriculum development, establishing performance competencies, teaching courses, offering scholarships, and providing internships. In return, employers get better prepared workers. While this relationship seems obvious, training programs can falter even when demand is high. At a time when labor demand in hazardous waste management was growing rapidly, South Seattle and two other community colleges in the area witnessed declining enrollments. The other colleges closed their programs, either due to the mistaken assumption that declining enrollments meant lack of demand, or because they did not want to commit resources to overhaul them. The problem was that the programs were not preparing students for the certifications demanded by industry. President Mitchell chose to invest in building a new program from the ground up because he believed that it served two important audiences (those trying to get off TANF and local employers), and developed relationships with key employers to do it.

Once employers trust the quality of workers hired through community colleges, they are more inclined to contribute funds for training. In Denver, Norwest Bank contributes approximately $40,000 in resources for each cohort in the financial services track of the Essential Skills program. Resources include one week of in-house training, mentoring, program supervision, and social and professional events. Other agencies subsidize internships. In Denver, Head Start agencies and Catholic Charities pay 15 percent of payroll costs for interns. Eight Denver hospitals provide on-site training for internships and have committed to offering paid internships (though currently they are subsidized either TANF funds or welfare-to-work wage subsidies). The community college-employer partnerships certainly are of the "win-win" variety.

Getting there has taken a lot of work. It takes a while for partners to figure out their mutual expectations. Educators often want to hold meetings that include employers while developing or revamping programs. Employers are typically more results-oriented and get frustrated because they perceive that "nothing is happening." They immediately want to know what's being offered and how it will benefit them. As one community college staff member stated, "They don't want partnerships, they want results."

It may even take a while for community college outreach staff to figure out who is the right person to contact in a potential business partner. Often the person who needs to be convinced of the need for training is the supervisor who has to pull someone off the line for training. "You'll only make your case," Baker warns, "if you show them that training is going to make their lives easier and improve return on investment." Working with employers, the college conducts a literacy audit of competencies and develops curriculum around needs.

An issue all the colleges face in trying to be relevant to employers is balancing the needs of employers for customized training with the need of students to have more general training applicable in multiple-employment settings. The colleges often find it difficult to generate sufficient demand for courses specific to any one employer. Yet even with cooperation from several employers, it is not easy to develop a program that meets the needs of a large group of small- to medium-sized employers.

The second set of partnerships community college programs need is one for providing extensive support services. President Mitchell of South Seattle Community College sees student services as the biggest problem for community colleges committed to serving low-income populations. He suggests that most colleges have rather rigid systems that will have to be reinvented. Further, funding streams to support extensive services are usually temporary. Indeed, a large body of literature on community college programs points to the importance of support services in program completion for low-income students. These include: transportation, child care, career counseling, life skills development, and case management (see Fitzgerald and Jenkins, 1997; Harrison, Weiss and Gant, 1996; Harrison and Weiss, 1999; Meléndez and Falcon, 1999). Community colleges do not have the funding or the infrastructure to provide all of the support services students need. While community colleges can provide some of these services, it may not be desirable for them to move too far away from their educational mission. Fitzgerald and Jenkins (1997) suggest that community colleges that offer too many social services are in danger of "mission creep." Rather, the most successful community colleges are those that establish partnerships to provide services. Common partners are social service agencies and community-based organizations (CBOs).

Two of the programs have CBOs as partners. The CBOs mainly provide referrals, both to the college program and support services. Some CBOS provide the support services and "soft" skills training. Others work with graduates on job-keeping skills.

Another important partnership for all of the programs is with government agencies implementing state welfare-to-work and TANF programs. South Seattle has just remodeled a building that will be used as a One-Stop Employment Center[9]. The Department of Social and Human Services will be located on campus, allowing students to access services easily. Staff estimate that the facility will bring several hundred students a week onto campus. While this may seem like an obvious choice, in some states One-Stop services are located far from community college campuses making it more difficult for students to access education (see McCormick, 1999).

6. The Role of a Labor Market Intermediary Is More Complex Than Connecting Supply and Demand

The three programs demonstrate that community colleges can be quite effective placement intermediaries. Community College of Denver has worked with firms on improving productivity through education and training. Baker noted, "Once supervisors understand that classes can impact their team's productivity, their involvement with the program moves from accommodating to participating." In an internal document Baker elaborates on how the community college becomes more important to the employer:

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[9]One-Stop Employment Centers are at the core of the Federal Workforce Investment Act of 1998, which consolidates Federal job training, adult education and literacy, and vocational rehabilitation programs into a more streamlined and flexible workforce development system. The One-Stops are the centralized point of access for all federally funded employment programs. The overriding goal of the One-Stop Employment Center approach is to place people in jobs as quickly as possible. Individuals use the One-Stops to find jobs, to find out about and access occupational education programs and career development services. The majority of clients are eligible only for a core set of job search services. Eligible clients can access job training through the One-Stops.

> Looking back at the development of our partner relationships, we can see a shift in roles, from educational provider to a blend of educational provider/organizational consultant. This shift is the outgrowth of numerous factors. First, we are in a unique position to gain access to valuable information about the problems that employees experience in doing their jobs. Much of this information is seldom captured within normal channels of communication because of the hesitancy of employees and/or supervisors to call attention to situations that are inefficient or problematic. Some of what we learn has immediate relevance to our education and training concerns, while other information relates to broader organizational issues. Our skill is in capturing this information and sharing it with our partners in a constructive format.

Baker cites a number of instances where she has convinced companies to invest in worker upgrading by demonstrating that it can be justified by productivity increases. Community College of Denver was contracted to teach a 12-hour basic math class with employees in the shipping department of a food processing plant. The company had shifted to a just-in-time delivery system which brought an increasing number of clerical and accounting errors. Most of the employees had been with the company for 20-25 years, and many did not have a high school diploma. Baker proposed that the company develop a pre- and post-test, and asked that the company also monitor errors in the shipping department. The improvements were so dramatic that all plant employees were put through the course. Once management saw the evidence in return-on-investment data, they were willing to pay for instruction. The bottom line is that employers need evidence of return on investment if they are to invest in training.

Community colleges have little leverage, however, as progressive intermediaries. While outreach staff have been able to demonstrate returns on investment for training, there are few instances where employers were influenced to create better jobs because the community college provided them a stream of reliable workers. This may be happening with TCB Industries as a result of the program at South Seattle. Currently, TCB employees are considered temporary workers, so they do not receive benefits. Many employees (almost half of whom are women and minorities) work part-time. Some hold another job and work only weekends for TCB. As more employees are staying with the firm, Schroeder is planning on offering a benefits package for those working 24 hours or more per week. Such results are few and far between and take time.

Career advancement opportunities are not simply a function of industry structure, but also of choices particular employers make. Bank teller programs illustrate this[10]. To date, Elaine Baker of

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[10]Bank Tellers and Beyond, offered by Wright College, one of Chicago's City Colleges, is an noteworthy program that could not be included in this study because staff were very involved in revamping the program. Although the program's Director, Nancy Bellew, had envisioned career ladders as part of the program, it took almost five years to interest banks in anything but entry-level training. The case is interesting in that it reveals the role of persistence of program staff in working with business partners in moving from entry-level to skills-upgrade training. From its inception, the program has had all the right stuff-good curriculum, employer involvement, support services, and post-placement follow up. Yet the retention rate of graduates at most banks was initially no higher than that of those hired "off the street." Few tellers advanced. Despite repeated efforts by Bellew, the banks expressed little interest in the college developing further courses to build skills for advancement. Five years later, two of the original bank partners are hiring almost all students as soon as they graduate. LaSalle Bank has reported a 68 percent retention rate of tellers since 1997. Almost

Community College of Denver reports that they have had little success in developing career ladders in the financial services area, although the program is very successful in placing graduates and Norwest Bank is an active partner. This year, CCD plans to address this by working with the American Institute of Banking and partner banks to identify appropriate courses for program graduates.

Banking is an interesting case for examining the potential for career ladder and wage progression strategies. It appears that the pendulum swung as far as it could go in the direction of deskilling entry-level jobs. Now, some banks, unable to keep up with the high turnover inherent to these high-stress jobs, are adding skills to existing jobs and creating advancement opportunities. The extent to which this marks a significant trend remains to be seen.

In the past 15 years, direct deposit, telephone banking, the Internet, and most significantly automated teller machines (ATMs) have revolutionized banking practices. ATMs have dramatically restructured the job of teller, but for the most part have not upgraded it[11]. In some banks the use of ATMs for routine banking transactions has been accompanied by a shift toward more sophisticated teller jobs with greater skill requirements. More frequently, though, tellers still conduct only routine transactions while customer service representatives and officers (typically college graduates) open new accounts and sell bank products such as loans and CDs. The percentage of banking jobs accounted for by professional occupations (those requiring post-secondary education) has grown dramatically (see Gester, 1998).

With the emphasis on sales, many banks changed telling from a predominantly full-time to a part- and peak-time job with even less opportunity for moving into better or full-time positions[12]. Seeing little growth opportunity, many tellers quit this high-stress job after a few months. Indeed human resource directors at six large Chicago banks working with teller training programs revealed that their turnover rates were between 60 and 80 percent. Two directors mentioned that the increase in part-time and peak-time scheduling has reduced employee loyalty, particularly in the banks that make it clear to prospective employees that neither part- nor peak-time jobs are stepping stones to full-time positions. Treating tellers as casual labor seems more cost-effective to managers than making the teller position a permanent first rung on a career ladder.

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half, 48 percent, have been retained longer than one year. Of all program graduates hired, 38 percent have been promoted to Teller 2 (see Fitzgerald and Carlson, 2000).

[11] ATMs allow banks to serve customers better and to reduce transaction costs significantly. According to the American Bankers Association a teller transaction costs a bank about $1.07, while the same transaction conducted at an ATM costs 27 cents. In 1975, fewer than 10 million ATM transactions were initiated for a total of $1 billion in transactions. By 1995 that number had risen to 9.7 billion transactions processed at 123,000 ATM terminals valued at $650 billion.

[12] Peak-time workers are used to cover high traffic hours such as late afternoons and weekends. The key difference between part- and peak-time jobs is that peak time workers receive higher wages, but are not eligible for benefits.

Interviews with several human resource officers suggest this strategy is changing for some banks as they recognize that tellers are the front line for customer contact. Rather than treating these front-line workers as casual labor, some banks are recognizing the value of investing more in their training, creating full-time opportunities, adding benefits, and offering better wages. These decisions are the result of seeing that customers are better served with front-line staff who are knowledgeable. It may be the case that similar observations will be made by employers in other service industries, creating a window of opportunity for community colleges to expand entry-level training programs into career ladder programs.

Overall, these examples illustrate how community colleges are being proactive in being responsive to the needs of business. That community colleges have limited capacity to affect skill demand is not a criticism, but rather a reality. As one administrator put it, "When it happens it's a bonus. When it doesn't, colleges can help students find ways to accumulate skills and move to other types of employment."

7. Wage Progression Strategies Won't Work for Everyone

Despite a supportive state government, a spirit of cooperation between employers and the community colleges, and a well-designed education or training program, it is not easy moving people into better jobs. Most of the programs are too new to have much data on career advancement. The most common comment heard in talking with faculty and staff at these and other community colleges was "It's hard."

Although some graduates are eager to continue their education while working, others find that the adjustment from not working to going to school, then to work, is enough of a life change. Shoreline's Lederer explains, "when you're dealing with someone who is a single parent, and has been out of the labor force, going to school is very new, intensive, and stressful. Then they are placed in a job. They have a lot vested in that job. Several students have declined to go back to school right away, telling me that they need to focus on the job if they're going to succeed."

Further, Shoreline's Windle points out that not everyone wants to advance. Career Progression Programs are great for students who are eager to move ahead and only need someone to help them figure out how to overcome obstacles. Others are not interested in working, let alone advancing, no matter how much help they are given. Windle sees these attitudinal differences in different classes. He notes that, in general, students in the evening class seem to have more life barriers and both less desire and ability to overcome them. Many of these students are enrolled because they have been told they have to do something or they will be off TANF. In contrast, students in the weekend class are noticeably more ambitious. He attributes the difference to the fact that most of the weekend students are working and thus are better able to see possibilities for advancement.

It is these differences in attitude that concern employers. Many employers are not as concerned about specific skills as they are with attitude. This is why the five programs place a lot of emphasis on "soft" skills.

The issue is more complex, however, than learning the right attitude. Windle explains there are lots of dignity issues students face on their first jobs. He relates the story of one woman who had lots of emotional issues that made it difficult for her to get along with people on the job. After several

years, she had held no job for longer than 4 months, and always blames on the employer who "didn't treat her with respect." Finally, once she was open to exploring how her interaction style might alienate people, she stayed with one job for over a year. Windle elaborates on how he has to guide students through "picking and choosing their battles, not quitting until they have another job, the right way and wrong way to quit a job, having a backup plan."

For those who do want to continue their education while working, a solution may be to incorporate learning into work time, but not too many employers pay for employees to go to school on company time, particularly if they are new. Some employers working with the Job Ladders program have realized that becoming a learning organization offers a good strategy for reducing turnover and maintaining a more committed and better-qualified labor force. For the most part, however, employees must upgrade their skills on their own time.

These comments from staff are more realistic than pessimistic. There are people who can move from basic literacy to a college education. They are the exceptions. Programs cannot be built around the assumption that everyone will follow a path of lifelong learning that ends in college. This does not mean the opportunity should not be available. It does mean that other paths to living-wage employment are needed, such as the Earned Income Tax Credit and unionization of more service sector jobs (see Fitzgerald and Carlson, 2000).

Conclusions: A Strategy for Community Colleges to Be Labor Market Intermediaries

These successful career ladder programs are small in scale relative to the need (the Conference Board report estimates there are between 4 and 5 million full-time workers earning poverty-level wages). Increased state funding for skills upgrading would help community colleges expand these programs. But if community colleges are to act as progressive intermediaries, they cannot do it alone. This level of intervention requires a two-pronged policy agenda. First, states have to make skills upgrading (including training for those making the transition from welfare to work and incumbent worker training for low-wage workers) a priority. This requires funding community colleges for career-ladder programs and businesses for training workers. Second, local labor market intermediaries are needed to make the connections between supply and demand. Local labor market intermediaries connect economic and workforce development in key sectors of the regional economy. This approach is known as a sectoral strategy.

Sectoral strategies are receiving considerable attention in both economic and workforce development circles because of their focus on growth industries and potential to create career advancement opportunities for low-wage workers. In sectoral strategies an intermediary provides solutions to industry problems and uses those solutions to improve training for incumbent workers and increase access to the industry for disadvantaged workers (Dresser and Rogers 1998:71).

In a 1995 Aspen Institute report, *Jobs and the Urban Poor: Privately Initiated Sectoral Strategies,* Clark and Dawson define sectoral initiatives as those that:

- Target a particular occupation within an industry.
- Intervene by becoming valued actors within the industry that employs the occupation.
- Exist for the primary purpose of assisting low-income people to obtain decent employment.
- Eventually create systemic change within that occupation's labor market.

Shoreline Community College is a partner in a larger sectoral initiative, the Seattle Jobs Initiative (SJI)[13]. Seattle is one of six cities that are part of the Annie E. Casey Foundation's eight-year Jobs Initiative. Started in 1995, the $30 million Jobs Initiative supports local government, community organizations, and educational institutions in pursuing a systems-reform agenda that places people in low-income communities in jobs that provide family-supporting benefits and have advancement potential.

As a labor market intermediary, SJI facilitates and coordinates a network of community organizations, community colleges, employers, unions, and government agencies to make all the links necessary to get people into jobs in targeted sectors of the regional economy. A targeted sector team composed of a sector manager, a broker, CBOs, and community colleges, works to create better links between supply and demand. The sector managers and brokers are SJI staff, while the

[13] Of course, the majority of students who need such assistance at Shoreline and South Seattle are not affiliated with the Seattle Jobs Initiative. The colleges have to provide services for these students.

CBOs and community colleges are subcontracted to provide services. Brokers are people or organizations with strong ties to industry that market SJI to employers and are the liaison among employers, training providers and CBOs. The brokers help employers experiencing labor shortages and/or high turnover identify workforce and training needs and work with the CBOs that refer candidates for job openings. In addition, brokers engage employers by involving them with community colleges in curriculum development and encouraging them to provide internships. As the brokers work with employers to learn their level of satisfaction with participants, they suggest curriculum changes to community colleges. This division of responsibilities allows each organization to focus on its core competencies. Brokers understand employer needs; community colleges provide education and training; CBOs provide recruitment, referrals to social support services, case management, "soft" skills, and post-employment follow-up.

With funds from the state incumbent-worker training program (the Job Skills Program), Shoreline and the SJI partnered in the Washington Incumbent Worker Training Demonstration Project. The project started in 1997 to test whether state customized training programs could promote the development of job ladders for low-income workers by marketing incumbent worker training in targeted industries. The Shoreline-SJI demonstration launched separate initiatives in aerospace and cosmetology. John Lederer (1998:11), who worked with the SJI at the time, found that the sector-based approach was successful in organizing employers around training in the aerospace industry. He continues:

> This finding is supported by the fact that Shoreline Community College and hundreds of aerospace supplier firms represented by the Washington Aerospace Alliance were able to cooperatively develop and receive an industry-wide Jobs Skills Program Grant to fund upgrade machine operator training. Although it remains to be seen whether the development of these upgrade training opportunities will, in fact, result in job promotion and wage progression.

Yet Lederer reveals that neither the cosmetology nor aerospace prototypes have achieved a level of scale and scope to transform local labor markets in either sector. This was partly because not enough time was allotted in the demonstration program to create that level of change in industry practice. But a big part of the failure is that employers are unwilling to make the high-skill, high-wage choice if they can be profitable following a low-skill, low-wage path. Indeed, while the SJI has been successful overall in providing people in low-income communities access to jobs paying at least $8.00 per hour, they have had little success in convincing employers to create more career ladders (Fitzgerald and Leigh, 2001). Likewise, acting independently, community colleges have the capacity to be effective placement intermediaries.

All three programs have been successful in connecting poor people to jobs to which they otherwise would not have had access. Yet Shoreline's collaboration with the state's incumbent worker training program and the SJI illustrates that even when state training policy, community colleges, and local labor market intermediaries are acting in tandem, it is difficult to affect the demand side.

We need to take the lessons from these initiatives and develop additional demonstration projects that have sufficient time to work. Further, we need to rethink how to provide incentives for employers to make the high-wage, high-skill choice. Community colleges are well positioned in current policy initiatives to become key providers of career ladder programs for incumbent workers. Most states have allocated funding for community colleges to develop new and improve existing welfare-to-work programs. It is likely community colleges will benefit from future Federal incumbent worker

funds as well. Thirteen cities have received a total of $11.2 million in Incumbent Worker Demonstration grants from the U.S. Department of Labor for projects that improve job retention and career advancement of incumbent workers in key industries. Community colleges are key actors in all 13 partnerships. These initiatives are already demonstrating success, suggesting that more permanent incumbent worker training funds will become available to community colleges.

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